

**File Code:** 2520; 5180**Date:** August 22, 2018**Route To:****Subject:** FY 2018 Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) for Salvage and Post Fire Restoration**To:** Forest Supervisors

Nationally this has already been an active, long and trying fire season. The peak of fire in the Pacific Northwest is upon us. I fully support your efforts to ensure continued focus and attention on suppression needs. At the same time I am keenly aware of the cumulative fatigue that employees are and will continue to experience due to a lengthy and challenging fire season and that many of our employees will also be heavily involved in post-fire activities through the fall and early winter. Pacing is critically important, as is working together to build a common understanding of needs across the region, so that we can best support each other in carrying out essential post-fire work before fall storms and winter snows arrive.

The shift to Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER), Rapid Assessment Teams (RATs), and other post-fire restoration work occurs in a systematic manner at appropriate points in time as fires are contained. Each of the activities in the sequence of events are linked, therefore actions implemented during suppression and suppression rehabilitation can influence what happens with BAER, post-fire restoration, and, where appropriate, salvage.

Cara Farr, Regional BAER coordinator, has already begun working with your coordinators to anticipate and assess BAER needs and identify BAER teams. Nationally very large and severe fires require well experienced team leaders for the BAER work and we are working nationally to match skills with the work. Going forward in Region 6 this is likely to require team leaders and/or members to work on fires other than those on their home units. The Regional Office via Cara will take a more active role in managing team leader and team member assignments to ensure we are using our BAER skills to best effect both nationally and across the region. As a continuation of our commitment to support fire, I expect you to make your employees available for BAER assignments when requested.

I expect each forest that experiences wildfire to develop a post-fire assessment. The level of detail and scope of the assessment will depend on your individual situation including whether or not your unit will consider salvage or what other post-fires restoration needs, beyond BAER, will need to be considered. Regional Office staff are available to provide supplemental capacity as requested to assist you with these assessments. The Regional Forester team will be contacting you at the appropriate time to discuss needs and approaches.

The Rapid Assessment Teams (RATs) consist of Regional Office natural resource, planning, and other specialists who are available to work collaboratively with forests to address, early and up front, the question of whether or not there are appropriate opportunities to pursue salvage. The primary focus of RATs is to assist forests to 1) quickly assess the incident; 2) make a go/no go decision if salvage should be pursued, and if so, where to salvage; and 3) identify the type of NEPA document that may be needed. A RAT+ process is also available to help forests develop needs assessment and approach for post-fire restoration activities beyond salvage.



If a forest is considering any post-fire salvage other than decked wood from suppression activities, a conversation with the Regional Office about a Rapid Assessment Team is required. This is to ensure consistency across the Region in making decisions to salvage material or not. Routine roadside and hazard tree salvage may only require a conversation with the RO; however evaluation of area salvage options will likely require a RAT. Forests are not required to request a RAT for log decks created during fire suppression activities. These decks should be sold as quickly as possible. The specific question of salvage beyond suppression decks should consider factors such as, but not limited to, effects to resources, capacity of forests and impacts to other priorities including maintaining a 'green' program, investment needed for planning, extent of social/collaborative support, market interest and mill capacity.

Depending on the complexity of the situation and needs of the forest, plus the desire to minimize travel, the rapid assessments may be conducted via VTC, in person, or a combination thereof. Where possible, RATs will be scheduled to commence after the completion of the BAER team assessment in order to use the field verified map products and BAER assessments to inform further post fire restoration work. In preparation for RAT analyses, Regional Office staff, along with Ray Davis from the Northwest Forest Plan monitoring program and DRM staff will be preparing post fire basal area loss maps for each fire in the Region. Unless needed to inform post fire reforestation efforts, please refrain from requesting additional RAVG runs from GTAC.


Although we will continue to pursue any potential funding opportunities for post-fire restoration, forests should assume that there will be limited additional funding and develop a plan that is within their existing capacity. This will necessitate discussions of priorities and trade-offs between post-fire restoration activities and the on-going program of work. The RAT+ teams can work with you to document the choices and implications so we can communicate our situation to the Washington Office as well as discuss both opportunities and implications to work with partners and other agencies in an all lands approach.

Post-fire restoration will include considerations for key resources and infrastructure such as range, wildlife, soils, fisheries, invasive species, roads, landlines and recreation. Items to address will include impacts to ongoing planning projects and opportunities to work across all lands for whole watershed work. Because of the limited funding for these types of projects, assessments should concentrate on the most critical areas; they should not be used to develop a long list of all the work that could be completed.

Further information regarding the RAT and RAT+ process, pre-work needed, example reports from previous years, and guidance for addressing active timber sale contracts affected by fire, are being posted to the following website <http://fsweb.r6.fs.fed.us/natural-resources/rapid-assessment-teams/>.

To request and schedule a RAT or RAT+, contact Aly Warren, Assistant Director of Natural Resources, at [alysonwarren@fs.fed.us](mailto:alysonwarren@fs.fed.us) or 503-808-2385.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Stay safe!

  
DIANNE C. GUIDRY  
Acting Regional Forester

cc: Marie-Louise Smith, Eric Johnston, Alyson Warren